

ii4           Luther and the Policy of  
Resistance.

achieve by the Colloquy of Marburg between the two great reformers was essential, for the South German cities followed Zwingli, and division in the Protestant camp, in the face of a formidable enemy, was equivalent to the ruin of the Protestant cause. Luther wrecked the landgrave's policy by his dogged refusal to recognise Zwingli and his followers as brethren and allies, because of a difference in the exegesis of a single text of Scripture! Nor would he move an inch from his dogma of passive obedience in response to the landgrave's practical appeal to his co-religionists to league themselves together and prepare to meet force with force. In his eyes Philip was a restless, revolutionary spirit, a second Franz von Sickingen or Von Hutten, whose readiness to draw the sword in defence of his faith must bring ruin on the Reformation cause. Once more in face of a situation which called for common-sense rather than pious exhortation, Luther appears as the opinionated theologian who, though he knew his Bible, did not know the world. Faith is the only factor that he will recognise as the arms of a Christian. God, not man, must save the Reformation, and his insistence on this maxim was as emphatic to the elector or the landgrave as to the oppressed peasants. There is a dogged consistency in this insistence which is not without a certain heroism, though Luther was ere long to confess himself "a child" in these matters and to go over, for the time being at least, to the landgrave's more manly view, in spite of himself. "Our Lord Jesus," wrote he to the elector, 22nd May 1529, "who hitherto has marvellously helped us . . . will assuredly help and counsel us further." There must be no organised resistance to the emperor, he warns him on the 18th November 1529. "Every man must defend his own faith, must believe or not believe at his own risk, if it comes so far that our overlord, the emperor, attacks us." He recoils at the prospect of a bloody religious strife. God forbid that the gospel should be a cause of bloodshed and ruin. Christians must rather give themselves as sheep to the slaughter, and may not avenge themselves, but give place to the wrath of God. In his view the emperor only required to be rightly informed as to the situation to do justice as between the two parties, and, even if he gives his verdict for repression and persecution, he must not be resisted. "It agrees not with the